



Office of the Provost
Concordia University

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Christopher Jackson, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, S-VA 250-2
Dr. Elizabeth Sacca, Dean, School of Graduate Studies, S-S 205

FROM: Cinzia Miscio, Coordinator, University Academic Appraisals *CM*

DATE: September 02, 2003

SUBJECT: Final University Appraisal Committee Report for Contemporary Dance

Please find enclosed the final version of the University Appraisal Committee Report for the department of Contemporary Dance.

Thank you.

cc: Dr. Jack Lightstone, Provost, S-BC 225
Dr. Brian Foss, Associate Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, S-VA 250-5
Professor Michael Montanaro, Chair, Contemporary Dance, Faculty of Fine Arts, L-TJ 307-1
✓ Professor Silvy Panet-Raymond, Associate Professor, Self Appraisal Committee Chair, Contemporary Dance, Faculty of Fine Arts, L-TJ 307-2

Contemporary Dance Department
Report of the University Appraisal Committee
Concordia University
24 May 2002

Members of the Appraisal Committee:

1. Dr. Miranda D'Amico (Chair)

Education Department

Faculty of Arts and Science

2. Dr. Juan Segovia

Accounting Department

Faculty of Commerce

3. Prof Wolfgang Krol

Studio Arts; Sculpture

Faculty of Fine Arts

4. Ms. Sasha Keinplat

Student Representative

Contemporary Dance Department

Edited: December 2002

Report of the Faculty Appraisal Committee for
The Department of Contemporary Dance

Dr. Elizabeth Sacca, Chair and Convenor, University Academic Appraisal established the Faculty Appraisal Committee for the Department of Contemporary Dance.

The committee began its work in March 2001 and met a total of eight times (including one all day meeting over a period of six months).

Introduction

This document is the report of the University Appraisal Committee's evaluation of the Contemporary Dance Program at Concordia University. The committee included three faculty members and a student representative: Dr. Miranda D'Amico (Education Department, Chair of the Committee), Dr. Juan Segovia (Accountancy Department), Prof. Wolfgang Krol (Studio Arts; Sculpture), and Sasha Keinplatt (Student Representative).

Throughout our deliberations the Committee adhered to the guidelines and criteria provided by the Senate for academic appraisal. We began by examining the Contemporary Dance Department's Self-Appraisal Report- that is, those portions of the report which directly addresses the mandate of an appraisal committee. We then invited two external consultants- Sara Porter and Philip Szporer- to meet with members of the Department, students and staff, as well as members of the University Administration, and finally with our Committee. We also invited individual faculty, staff and students to make written or oral presentations. Our meeting produced useful insights and a valuable perspective on the department with respect to its counterparts locally and in Canada. Subsequently we received and studied the reports of the external consultants, and, together with the Department's original Self-Appraisal have incorporated their views into our final report.

As the University Appraisal Committee, we would like to state from the beginning of this report that we concur with the Department's Self- Appraisal Report, which concerns the direction, structure, activities, and future of the Contemporary Dance Program. It is also very clear from the reports of the two external consultants that the Dance Department has a solid reputation among its peers and in the Dance community. In the words of the External Consultant, Sara Porter, *"I found the department, its faculty, staff and students to be exceptionally content, motivated and productive, and part of a well-functioning structure that seems on the whole, to exhibit few problems and express very few complaints. The Concordia University Dance Department has built and maintained a*

considerable reputation amongst dance artists and the Canadian modern/contemporary dance community over the past twenty years as an institution committed to creative research and developing the individual creativity of each student in the program. The success of the department is evident by the numerous graduates over the years who have pursued, attained, productive and visible careers in contemporary dance in Canada.”

Similarly, the firm commitment of the Dance Department to teaching and practice and to maintaining high standards was emphasised by all of those who appeared before the Committee.

The Committee generally shares the same views expressed by the external consultants and we endorse their reports without reservations. (Their reports are appended)

We would also like to comment here, on the leadership and dynamism of the two full-time faculty members. Both Profs. Michael Montanaro and Silvy Panet-Raymond, have created a strong and emancipatory department. Their interdisciplinary skills are qualities that complement each other and are very instrumental in organizing enriching experiences for the students. Both are seen as deeply committed and competent, by the part-timers and the students alike. They have definitely gone beyond their “call of duty” in managing the Department and in providing the students with both relevant practical expertise and professional training.

Nevertheless, in a period of ongoing fiscal restraint and dwindling resources, the Committee was also made aware of the increasing difficulties faced by the Department and its full-time faculty members in maintaining its standards and energy.

This appraisal process therefore provides an opportunity to highlight the significant accomplishments of the Department, at the same time it allowed for a timely examination of current challenges and future objectives. Hopefully, the efforts of the University Appraisal Committee will be of assistance to the Department as it continues to reflect on its mission.

Outline of the visits

At the department, we met with the two full-time faculty - Michael Montanaro, Acting Chair, and Silvy Panet-Raymond, Associate Professor. We interviewed several part-time faculty members - Florence Figols, Sandra Lapierre, Rachel Van Fossen, Pamela Newell - and the Assistant to the Chair, Hillary Scuffell. In addition, we met with a group of

students representing the three levels in the program- Tamara Naccato, Laura Kappel. Andrew Tay, Livia Pellerin, Magalie Cantin, and Sandy Williams. As well, we spoke to Dr. Andrea Fairchild, Associate Dean - Academic and Student Affairs, Faculty of Fine Arts and Dr. Elizabeth Sacca, Chair and Convenor, University Academic Appraisals. At the Department of Contemporary Dance, our visit took place on the third floor of the TJ (Loyola) Building, including visits to 2 large studios, 2 smaller studios in the Theatre Department (on the ground floor), as well as the two offices occupied by full-time staff, a media room (video, audio, software applications), a reception area, a student locker and lounge area plus the part-time faculty/storage room. At the Sir George Campus, the Department has access to 2 classroom size studios, for labs and rehearsal use. We had the opportunity to sit in on several classes - Choreography II, Body Movement I and Body Movement III, and Workshop in Dance II.

Faculty

The Department has two full time faculty members- Profs. Michael Montanaro and Silvy Panet-Raymond. Both have strong qualities that complement the other. They are very different in temperament and discipline. Both are seen as deeply competent, by the part-timers and the students alike.

The overall perception is that under the current Chair, Prof. Michael Montanaro, the department is a visible and interesting place. This has certainly come about from his presence. With his background as a performer, company director, multimedia artist and teacher, he also has a deep connection with interdisciplinary and technological research in stage production.

There is a very high ratio of part-time (currently eleven) to full time faculty members, which makes it somewhat unusual in its composition within the university. Along with this, come obvious benefits and limitations. The part time faculty are highly qualified and experienced dance professionals. Each is active in the Montreal dance community with varying degree of international exposure in both choreography and performance. From the feedback received by both the Chair of the Department and the students interviewed, the quality of instruction that each brings to the Department is exceptionally high. The benefit to the pedagogy of the program is that the students benefit from instructors, who have active careers as artists and who as a result, are continuously

informed from the professional activity that they engage in. The direct connection that the part time instructors have with the performance community, also has a very direct and creative benefit for the students, by not only familiarising them with the dance facilities, but also exposing them to a broad variety of dance venues and work.

Still, many voices in the department expressed the wish that another full-time faculty member could be appointed to pick up the slack, share in the stress, paperwork, general bureaucratic and time management considerations and managerial strategies that are part of running the department.

The Contemporary Dance Program

The three-year Bachelor of Fine Arts degree program in Contemporary Dance consists of 60 credits for the Major itself, and 30 credits in electives (12 of which must be selected from courses outside the Faculty of Fine Arts and Communication Studies) to make up the 90-credits required for the BFA degree.

The program is described as being designed to *develop contemporary dancers and choreographers, with emphasis on the discovery and development of the creative capacity of each student*. Concordia University is one of the few universities in Canada that offers courses in choreography. Students in these courses have the opportunity of staging their choreographies for and with fellow students in the Dance program, as well as staging performances with students in other areas of the performing arts within the University.

The strength of the Dance Department owes much to the committed faculty (both full time and part time) that have supported and nurtured many successful dancers and choreographers over the years. The Department has remained consistent with its mission and mandate and has endured some very challenging shortages of both personnel and resources—yet, surfacing as a very viable and thriving Department in the University and the Faculty of Fine Arts.

Suggested Improvements to the Program

The recommendations below are given in the spirit of helpful additions to what the External Consultant, Sara, Porter, referred to as a “*successful enterprise in education*”. The recommendations refer to the weaknesses of the Dance Department as expressed by the students and, part time faculty and the External Consultants. The UAC Committee

acknowledges that the Dance Department addressed most of these concerns in their Self-Appraisal document. The UAC also acknowledges that the Department has already addressed those concerns, which were aimed at improving the pedagogy of the Dance Program. Namely, making change towards the course content and structure with regards to increasing the hours allotted for technique classes; alternative courses in technical training for dancers; courses on writing skills for research papers, to write dance criticisms. In addition, upgrade the existing progress reports, written feedback, evaluations from teachers to students, and integration of music appreciation and development for dance through seminars, workshops and collaborative projects. The main concerns for the UAC Committee as articulated in more depth in this report by listing them as recommendations include the Department 's relationship to the library; the shortage of library resources relevant to the Department's Program; the need for new space and larger size studios in the immediate vicinity of the dance Department; issues related to the number of hours allocated to live musical accompaniment for technique classes; safety and health issues in rehearsal studios and especially the downtown facilitates; and the possibility of hiring a third full time faculty position. We would like to stress that our intention in this report is not to articulate radical changes to the working practices and structure of the Dance Department, but to make recommendations that would ensure continued success.

Recommendations:

The UAC Committee unanimously recognizes the quality of the Contemporary Dance program, the immense effort that the faculty and staff has put out in maintaining its Program as a recognizable vital asset to the artistic community as well as the university. It must also be recognized that in order to maintain the status quo of this vital programme the existing faculty members will be continuously taxed to the maximum. In order for the Department to develop and refine its efficiency it needs help and support. Any additional help either financial or through personnel would greatly assist the program and existing faculty to function more efficiently and effectively. Notwithstanding the decision that the faculty has taken on themselves to improve their efficiency and visibility as outlined in their appraisal document, the following are the recommendations of the UAC based on

the aggregate review and evaluation of the Appraisal Document and the external evaluator's report and our own observations:

1. The initial and prime recommendation would be to improve and update the technical and library resources. Extensive videos, periodicals and books on the current events in dance as well as on the history of dance are desperately needed to maintain a cutting edge in the media. This has a cost, but can be directed to specific purchases through the resources of the library. In addition, media and technical facilities would be required. Some of this can be supplemented through ITTS, but equipment assigned to the Dance Department directly would have a more spontaneous, immediate and long-term benefit for teaching, demonstrating student evaluation, publicity, and promotion of the programme.
2. Clearly define the philosophy and objectives of the Dance programme, as it exists with the present space and resources and with the addition of space and personnel. This will enable the part time faculty to see themselves as a more integrated part of the programme.
3. Unless new space and new faculty are acquired, growth should be limited to the existing numbers or to an increase that would increase the FTE's but not tax the instructors and the efficiency of the existing program.
4. Increase the technique classes and maintain live accompaniment. The technique classes are a vital part in strengthening the personal development of the dancers as well as give them a strong grounding in the understanding of body anatomy and technical function as related to dance. This has a cost, but the UAC sees this as necessary to the quality operation of the program.
5. Imperative also is the ongoing hygienic maintenance of the dance studios. Assure safety to those students who use the downtown studios. This has a cost, but is necessary to the health and safety regulation and well being of the students and faculty. One suggestion, though probably not popular, would be to have the students, before beginning a class or especially after class is finished (before they shower) take mops or damp cloths and wipe down the studios. This process and discipline is often used in martial arts Dojos, to teach respect and appreciation for the environment and space that has offered them the opportunity to learn and to present it to the next class in the same condition that the previous class received it! This could dramatically reduce the cost of studio maintenance

and improve the studio hygiene.

6. In addition to the exceptional fund raising efforts to supplement the drastic cut backs – Monies should be found by the Faculty of Fine Arts to assist this highly efficient and productive department. It is unfair to continuously expect a small department, or any department for that matter, functioning at its maximum, to use up even more energy for raising money instead of educating and developing students.

7. Every effort should be made by the Faculty of Fine Arts to support new space so desperately needed to relieve the strain and allow for a better scheduling of the technique classes and the dance classes. The Dance Department as seen by the UAC, is presently doing its utmost in their outreach programme liaison workshops, and publicity. This needs to be maintained and funded. The rest of the faculty of Fine Arts should be made aware of the exceptional effort the Dance Department is making with bare bones resources. The UAC has only positive assessment of this department and supports the maintaining of the program and efforts which the department is constantly making to improve and develop-- as is feasible under given financial constraints.

8. The last, but certainly not the least of the recommendations is additional personnel help. One of the main problems which plagues the dance department is the inability of the present full time faculty to maintain rigorous academic and service schedule and to do the research necessary to keep the department at the forefront of its genre. The UAC strongly supports the need for additional personnel support to help with the operation of the Dance Department. There is a cost involved with this, but we believe that the cost far outweighs the physical strain and potential burnout of the present full time faculty. The stress must be alleviated. It is only a matter of how much support the rest of the faculty is willing to acknowledge. The size of the Department may not mandate extra full time personnel— however, due to the nature and collaborative functionality of the Department, extra personnel is necessary.

Summary

Certainly, the dynamic environment that now prevails at Concordia University with respect to both financial and faculty renewal and the genuine commitment in pursuing these goals makes the above recommendations important ones in terms of strategic planning.

The Contemporary Dance Department is an asset to both Concordia and the Faculty of Fine Arts. It makes a contribution to Concordia's distinctiveness in a manner consonant with the University's Mission. The above recommendations underline that the existence and integrity of the Contemporary Dance Department, its academic mission and program, need some additional support. The above recommendations are offered in the spirit of strengthening the unit and its contributions to the University.

Respectfully,